

July 28, 2003

Robert C. Hight, Director
California Department of Fish and Game
1416 Ninth Street, 12th Floor
Sacramento, California 95814

Dear Director Hight:

Shasta and Scott River Pilot Program for Coho Salmon Recovery

The Shasta-Scott Coho Recovery Team (SSRT) is pleased to present its Shasta and Scott River Pilot Program for Coho Salmon Recovery (Pilot Program). Our report presents recommendations for recovery actions relating to agriculture and agricultural water use in the Shasta and Scott valleys in Siskiyou County. The Pilot program represents a sustained effort by the members of the SSRT over the past seven months. Moreover, the Pilot Program builds on over 15 years of local experience in restoring instream and riparian habitats to benefit anadromous salmonids in these two river systems.

Our report organizes recovery recommendations into seven action categories: water management, water augmentation, habitat management, water use efficiency, protection, monitoring and assessment, and finally, public education and outreach. We believe that the measures and recommendations developed by the team provide a reasonable balance between public and private costs, provide reasonable assurances that necessary short term recovery measures will be taken, and that an adequate scientific basis will be developed to support longer term steps toward coho recovery.

The SSRT believes that the successful implementation of the Pilot Program is inextricably linked to the development of a programmatic implementation framework which covers normal ranching and farming activities consistent with the Pilot Program. This framework should include necessary Streambed Alteration Agreements for water diversion and other instream work as well as coverage for any unavoidable incidental take of coho salmon or other listed species. It is critically important that some mechanism be in place to allow the continuation of essential agricultural activities prior to the 2004 field season. We also strongly recommend that issuance of state Incidental Take Permits be coordinated with federal requirements under the Endangered Species Act in order to provide increased regulatory certainty for the agricultural communities in these two valleys.

The timeline for accomplishing our task has been aggressive. The SSRT has met on multiple days each month in addition to continuous subcommittee meetings to further develop and refine individual recommendations. Nevertheless, additional work remains

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to be completed. The SSRT has given preliminary approval to the recommendations in the Pilot Program. However, the team needs additional clarification on how the Pilot Program will be implemented with respect to permitting before it can give its final approval

The team is fully prepared to present our Pilot Program to the Fish and Game Commission. We are confident that the program will accomplish our goals and achieve the results reflected in our mission statement. However we believe that additional time is essential in order to finalize the team's work. The SSRT remains committed to working with the Department of Fish and Game to develop a permitting strategy that will ensure successful implementation of the Pilot Program. We plan to continue this critically important phase of our work in the coming months if the Commission grants an extension to the recovery strategy process.

Sincerely,

Members of the Shasta-Scott Recovery Team

Terry Anderson
Recreational Angling

Phillip Detrich
US Fish & Wildlife Service

Mary Roehrich
Mt. Shasta Area Audubon

Martin Andreas
SOSS

Blair Hart
Shasta RCD

Lisa Thompson
UC Davis Coop. Extension

Bill Bennett
Dept. of Water Resources

Don Howell
Siskiyou RCD

Dave Webb
Shasta River CRMP

Gary Black
Scott R. Watershed Council

Craig Martz
Dept. Fish and Game

Greg Bryant
NOAA Fisheries

R. Howard Moody
Siskiyou County

attachment